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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000704

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE PROFILE: EUGENE DIOMI

Classified By: A/DCM MSanderson, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) Although there are 33 presidential candidates registered for the DRC's upcoming elections, there are only about a dozen who can actually be considered serious candidates. One of these is Eugene Diomi, head of the Christian Democrats, a party which has its roots in Bas Congo province (Diomi proudly sports the humble copper bracelet of a traditional chief of his tribe) but which is also strong in Kinshasa and Bandundu provinces, and is gaining a respectable foothold in both Kivu provinces in eastern Congo. Diomi, whose former governmental positions include Vice-Minister of Economy and, more recently, Minister of Mines (a post he lost in the wake of a well-publicized and documented corruption scandal) says he is confident he will win or, at the very least, be the runner-up to Kabila and therefore the natural choice for Prime Minister. He had just returned April 29 to Congo from a self-described fund-raising tour in Europe (Italy, Belgium, France). During a May 1 conversation PolCouns used three issues - security, economics and politics -- to extract Diomi's presidential vision.

Security: Military Meritocracy Is the Answer

¶2. (C) PolCouns noted that, east or west, the number-one concern expressed by Congolese citizens is the lack of security. She asked Diomi how he would address this problem. Diomi said his priority would be to sweep clean the detritus in the military command structure, replacing most of the "incompetent" ex-combatants with officers who had received military training in the U.S. or Europe. These professional and well-trained officers (note: most of whom already are in the command structure, end note) would be able to take charge of the multitude of security problems confronting the military. When PolCouns asked whether the Maison Militaire (a parallel security structure run by the National Security Advisor) would continue to play a decisive (and sometimes paralyzing) role in military issues, Diomi seemed confused and didn't answer. PolCouns asked specifically what President Diomi would do about the presence of the FDLR in the Kivu provinces, and Diomi said that his better-trained and more professional army would fight the FDLR and force them out. Of course, that wouldn't happen right away, as Diomi admitted that the FARDC troops currently deployed in the Kivus (and throughout the country) would have to be "reevaluated," and those who remained in the military would require substantial training to become a professional force. He did not seem to have yet thought about improving the national police force.

Economy: Fewer Pesky Customs Agents

13. (C) PolCouns asked how Diomi would address the pressing range of economic and social issues, including repairing Congo's collapsed infrastructure, ensuring regular payment of salaries to government workers, and attracting and retaining foreign investment. Diomi, who said he is planning his first campaign visit to North and South Kivu in the next few weeks, began by previewing his key message to Kivutians. Diomi said the newly installed border and customs agents in both provinces are stifling cross-border trade opportunities, and that fewer restrictions are required. This will make small businessmen in the Congo happy because it will be easier for them to get goods to markets in Rwanda and Uganda, and will make those two countries happy because it will be much easier for them to do business with the Congo. Of course, he added, this principle would apply throughout the Congo, as it is equally important to encourage trade with Angola and Zambia. He also said that he would privatize many current state-run operations such as airports and ports, and would encourage the construction of a nationwide series of toll roads to facilitate truck transport of goods. A clear and transparent process for establishing new businesses, and possible tax incentives, would encourage foreign investment in these and other sectors. When asked about what steps he would take to ensure that the IMF could reestablish a program in DRC, Diomi said he didn't know what the issue is but would work closely with both the IMF and World Bank as necessary.

Politics: Focus on Cooperation

14. (C) President Diomi's government would be composed of a

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maximum of six "State Ministers" (a rank above that of Minister but below Prime Minister, a sort of super-Ministerial position) and 30 Ministers. His Prime Minister would be chosen from the eastern part of the country, to maintain regional balance. Possible candidates would include Pierre Pay Pay or Mbusa Nyamwisi (rival presidential candidates). Current President Kabila, whom Diomi detests, was not mentioned. His policies would focus on cooperating, first regionally, then on the continent, and then with the broader international community, on finding ways to implement his New Deal for Congo.

Comment

15. (C) Presumably Diomi's thinking on the areas mentioned above will continue to evolve as he considers his positions more in depth. However, the mix of the ludicrous and the workable probably won't change much. Diomi considers himself a "big-picture" man. He would probably rely on someone else to fill in the blanks on how to make things work and how to run the government on an even lower revenue-collection basis than is currently the case (since when he eliminates customs agents he will also eliminate the taxes they are collecting). While not a visionary, Diomi is, unfortunately, something of a demagogue. Since he also is rich, he has the capacity to mount a real -- and possibly surprising -- campaign.
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